

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	30th January 2025
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for the Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage/Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities
Head of Service	Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities
Report author	Deborah Owen, Principal Librarian
Title	Library Service Standards and Performance 2023-24

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report highlights the Library Service's performance against National Standards

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 To provide information regarding the Council's performance in relation to the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-20 (extended for 21-24) and the progress made in developing libraries as places of individual and community well-being and resilience.

2.2 It should be noted that this report relates to Denbighshire's Library Service for the financial year 2023-24. The impact on performance of changes to the Library/One Stop Shop service is not expected to be manifest until June 2024, when opening hours were reduced.

2.3 New National Standards are expected to be established with the publication of the 7th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, which has a provisional implementation date of 1st April 2025.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers and comments on the performance against the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards and considers requesting a progress report in January 2026.

4. Report details

4.1. Welsh Public Library Standards

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-06/addendum-to-the-sixth-framework-of-welsh-public-library-standards-wpls-for-2023-2024-and-2024-2025.pdf>

- 4.2. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of public library authorities to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service" and makes it a duty of the Welsh Ministers "to superintend and promote the improvement" of public library services. To discharge this responsibility, the Welsh Government administers the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) to assess library provision and performance across Wales.
- 4.3. Library Services submit an Annual Report, noting performance for the previous financial year, to which Welsh Government Culture Division (WGCD) responds with an Annual Assessment Report. The most recent Annual Assessment Report covers 2023-24 and performance against the full 6th Framework 2017-20 (extended to 2024), and consists of 13 Core Entitlements and 7 Quality Indicators with specific targets. The report is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.4. Denbighshire has met 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the seven quality indicators which have targets, Denbighshire is achieving six in full and one in part. Please see page 2 of the Annual Assessment Report in Appendix A.
- 4.5. QI 4 Support for health and well-being. Met in full. This includes supporting the Reading Well scheme, designated health and wellbeing collections, and signposting to health and wellbeing services. All our libraries host weekly Talking

Points, providing people with the opportunity to have a face to face conversation with a Community Navigator.

4.6. QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements. Met in full.

4.7. Total attendance at library events has increased by 25% since 2022-23 and Denbighshire is above the median for per capita event attendance (QI6). Events include reading groups, Craft and Chat; Knit and Natter; Paned a Sgwrs; English and Welsh reading groups; craft groups; author events; class visits; and Bookstart Rhymetimes. The service has a strong under 5s offer and Rhymetimes account for 45% of event attendances. The service offers activities and services for customers with particular needs, for example, providing SIM cards to people unable to afford their monthly top up through the National Databank scheme. During the winter months libraries were part of the Warm Welcome scheme, offering free teas and coffees to residents. Denbighshire Libraries worked with local organisation Making Sense Community Interest Organisation (CIO) on a memory box project for people living with dementia.

4.8. QI 7: Location of service points. Met in full.

4.9. QI 9: Up to date and appropriate reading material. Met in full.

Denbighshire meets the acquisitions rate target and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure. The percentage of the budget allocated to children's resources is above the median. 23,509 items were acquired in 23-24. This includes the individual titles made available via subscriptions to two digital download sites Borrowbox (eBooks, audiobooks and newspapers) and Overdrive (magazines) - a total of 12,243 titles. The total physical books and audiobook items purchased was 11,266.

4.10 QI 10: Welsh Language Resources. Met in full.

The service exceeds the target for per capita spend on Welsh language resources. It is above the median for per capita Welsh language issues which have risen by 14% since 2022-23 (QI10). 71% of Welsh language issues were for children's books.

4.11 QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications. Partially met.

Denbighshire still does not meet the targets for either total staff or qualified staff per capita. We have not met it since the libraries and one stops were merged. Most libraries in the service are one stop shops, and the majority of frontline, supervisory and managerial staff spend approx. 50% of their time on their Customer Services roles therefore only 50% of the staffing level is reported as library provision. This year Welsh Government is supporting a nominated member of staff to complete professional library training, so this should help Denbighshire to meet the target for qualified staff.

4.12 QI 16 Opening hours per capita, met in full.

The service meets the target for opening hours per capita and is above the median for this measure, however, going forward this will be affected by the reduction in opening hours in June 2024.

4.13 Authorities were also required to submit a narrative report including an impact to demonstrate the library has had on an individual, a commentary on the service's contribution to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, and to reflect on the future direction and plans for the library service. The narrative report for Denbighshire is attached as Appendix B.

5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1 The Library Service is a statutory responsibility of the Authority and its services contribute to a number of corporate objectives and themes, including a healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire; a learning and growing Denbighshire; a better connected Denbighshire; a fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire; a Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and a well run high performing council.

6 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 There are no financial proposals associated with this report.

7 What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1 A well-being impact assessment has not been undertaken, as this is a performance report for information. The 6th Framework of Library Standards demonstrates how libraries have a clear contribution to make to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

8 What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 Performance Scrutiny in January 2024 considered the Library Services performance for 2022-23. The Library Service also went to a Special Scrutiny meeting in January 2024 regarding the proposed budget cuts. A Library Task Force was also set up, with the Cabinet Member and representatives from each Member Area Group (MAG), to review the model of the Library and One Stop Service in Denbighshire, with its first meeting in April 2024.

9 Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 As this is a report on historical performance there are no direct financial implications to this report.

10 What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 As this report is on historical performance there are no risks associated with it.

11 Power to make the decision

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

11.2 Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution stipulates that scrutiny may 'review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy, objectives, performance targets and / or particular service areas'.